

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 3507

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, ET, US
SUBJ: MEEING WITH MENGISTU

REF: ADDIS ABABA 3505

1. AS REPORTED REFTEL, I MET WITH MENGISTU FOR ALMOST 90 MINUTES AFTERNOON JUNE 3. AFTER DISPOSING OF MY QUESTIONS RE REDUCTION OF THE US MISSION, HE THEN IMMEDIATELY LAUNCHED INTO LONG PRESENTATION CONCERNING REVOLUTION AND HIS PERCEPTIONS OF AMERICAN ATTITUDES TOWARD IT, PREFACING HIS REMARKS WITH AN EXPRESSION OF HOPE THAT WAYS AND MEANS MIGHT BE FOUND TO IMPROVE OUR RELATIONS BEFORE THEY REACH A POINT OF NO RETURN, AND COMMENTING THAT RELATIONS ARE BETWEEN PEOPLES WHO ARE ALWAYS THERE, IN CONTRAST TO GOVERNMENTS WHICH CHANGE.

2. HE THEN NOTED THAT GOOD RELATIONS THAT EXISTED BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND US HAVE BEEN "MARKED" BY UNFAVORABLE REMARKS BY USG OFFICIALS AND PRESS CAMPAIGNS, A DEVELOPMENT HE SAW AS UNFORTUNATE FOR THE FUTURE, SINCE THEY HAD PASSED FROM THE STAGE OF CREATING DIFFICULTIES BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS TO BEING OFFENSIVE TO THE PEOPLE OF ETHIOPIA. "IT IS NOT OUR INTENTION TO SEE THIS CONTINUE." HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT WE AMERICANS UNDERSTOOD ETHIOPIA WELL, THAT WE UNDERSTOOD THAT EVEN THOUGH ETHIOPIA WAS INDEPENDENT DURING COLONIAL PERIOD, PEOPLE DID NOT HAVE DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS. NINETY

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PERCENT OF PEOPLE LIVED LIFE OF POVERTY, IGNORANCE AND DISEASE IN RURAL AREAS WHILE LANDLORDS LIVED LIFE OF LUXURY AT THEIR EXPENSE, KEEPING PRIVELEGES FOR THEMSELVES. WE AMERICANS, FOR EXAMPLE, WERE FULLY AWARE OF EFFORTS OF PAST REGIME TO COVER UP A NATURAL DISASTER (REFERENCE WAS PRESUMABLY TO FAMINE OF 3-4 YEARS AGO)

3. PEOPLE THEREFORE, SUPPORTED BY MEN-IN-UNIFORM DECIDED TO BREAK AWAY FROM SYSTEM AND EFFORT NOW IS TO BRING ABOUT SITUATION WHERE FRUITS OF LABOR ARE SHARED, WHEN PEOPLE HAVE POLITICAL POWER, AND THERE ARE JUSTICERIGHTS FOR ALL.
RECALLING HISTORY OF AMERICAN REVOLUTION, HE DID NOT BELIEVE US PEO-
PLE WANTED SEE OLD SYSTEM CONTINUE. BUT FROM VERY BEGINNING OF
REVOLUTION, AMERICAN PRESS HAS ENGAGED IN UNFAVORABLE COMMENTARY AND
PROPAGANDA HOSTILE TO REVOLUTION AND ETHIOPIAN PEOPLE. WE ETHIO-
PIANS ACCEPTED THAT US HAS INDEPENDENT PRESS, BUT NOW SENIOR USG
OFFICIALS HAVE BEGUN INTERFERING IN ETHIOPIAN INTERNAL AFFAIRS
AND PEOPLE OF ETHIOPIA WILL BE ANGERED AND DISPLEASED.

4. MENGISTU THEN MENTIONED TERMINATION OF MAP "ON PRETEXT OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS." ETHIOPIA WAS ALWAYS UNDER IMPRESSION THAT ASSISTANCE WAS PROVIDED FOR WELL-BEING OF ITS PEOPLE. THIS ACTION INDICATED THE CONTRARY, AND SINCE IT HAD BEEN TERMINATED, MAAG, NAMRU ET AL HAD BECOME "REDUNDANT", SO WE DECIDED TO CLOSE THEM WITHOUT AFFECTING OUR BASIC FUNDAMENTAL BILATERIAL RELATIONS.

5. RETURNING TO REVOLUTION, HE AGAIN OBSERVED THAT NOW, WHEN ETHIOPIAN PEOPLE ARE UNITED AND ARE FULLY SUPPORTING PRESENT REGIME, US PRESS WHICH DID NOT SPEAK OUT THEN AGAINST STARVATION AND DEATHS, IS TALKING ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS AND USG OFFICIALS ARE JOINING THEM. OBJECTIVE OF THIS MEETING IS BECAUSE "I (MENGISTU) THINK THE CAMPAIGN OF OUR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAS REACHED A STAGE WHERE IT IS SPOILING TRADITIONAL GOOD RELATIONS." APART FROM THIS, WE HAD TRUSTED IN AND MADE DEALS WITH A MAJOR POWER IN TERMS OF WEAPON ACQUISITION AND WE HAVE BEEN DENIED THESE WEAPONS.

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6. MENGISTU THEN SUGGESTED USG WAS PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO THOSE "SHEDDING BLOOD" OF ETHIOPIAN PEOPLE AND THIS WILL NOT HELP BI-LATERAL RELATIONS AND WILL ONLY CREATE RESENTMENT FOR LONG TIME TO COME AMONG ETHIOPIANS.
(HE RETURNED TO THIS THEME LATER WHEN I COULD GET A WORD IN, AND SAID HE MEANT EDU AND EPRP. I THEN CATEGORICALLY DENIED WE WERE DOING ANY SUCH THING).

7. RETURNING ONCE MORE TO STATEMENTS BY USG OFFICIALS, HE SAID "CAMPAIGN" THEY CARRYING OUT IS NOT COMMENSURATE WITH "GENEROSITY" WITH WHICH WE HAVE TREATED OUR AMERICAN GUESTS IN ETHIOPIA. IN INTEREST OF OUR RELATIONS, E.G., EPMG HAD NOT GONE OUT OF ITS WAY TO OVERPUBLICIZE THE TWO CIA AGENTS (HAMMOND AND HAMILTON, PRESUMABLY), NOR MADE THINGS DIFFICULT FOR EMBASSY PERSONNEL (I NEVER HAD OPPORTUNITY TO GO BACK TO HIM ON MATTER OF THE TWO CIA AGENTS). IN HIS VIEW, "CAMPAIGN" BY US OFFICIALS HAS PASSED ITS LIMITS. IS THIS WHAT USG WANTS? ETHIOPIA WANTED CONTINUE OUR RELATIONSHIP AND FRIENDSHIP. DID WE?

8. THAT WAS MY CUE AND DRAWING HEAVILY ON STATE 62081, 66464,
125633, I MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. SAYING MY MAJOR CONCERN WAS BILATERAL RELATIONS WHICH IN VIEW
OF EPMG'S UNILATERAL ACTIONS, I COULD HARDLY CHARACTERIZE
AS NORMAL, A DEVELOPMENT USG NEITHER WELCOMED NOR DESIRED, I TOLD
HIM I WOULD CERTAINLY REPORT HIS VIEWS TO WASHINGTON AND HOPED
NOW TO HEAR HIS VIEWS ON WHERE RELATIONS GO FROM HERE. I TOLD HIM
WE FULLY RECOGNIZED EPMG WAS IN PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTING MAJOR
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC REFORMS IN REVOLUTIONARY SITUATION AND THAT OLD
PATTERNS OF RELATIONSHIPS CHANGED, BUT THAT WERE WERE NONETHE-
LESS DISAPPOINTED AT OUR INABILITY TO HAVE CONTACT AT POLICY LEVELS
WITH EPMG OVER PAST TWO YEARS. CLOSE REVIEW OF RECORD WILL SHOW THAT
USG HAS CONTINUED SUPPORT ETHIOPIA'S DEVELOPMENT DESPITE INTERNAL
POLITICAL CHANGE. WE HAVE STRENUOUSLY TRIED TO DEMONSTRATE SINCE
BEGINNING REVOLUTION THAT OUR LONG ASSOCIATION WITH ETHIOPIA
WAS NOT DEPENDENT UPON PARTICULAR FORM OF GOVERNMENT OR ONE LEADER,
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WITNESS OUR FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA AND
TANZANIA. WE HAVE DILIGENTLY ATTEMPTED TO MAINTAIN OUR SIDE OF BI-
LATERAL RELATIONSHIP, CONTINUING OUR ECONOMIC AID AND OFFERING TO
PARTICIPATE IN PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE GRATER SOCIAL JUSTICE
IN ETHIOPIA WHICH I BELIEVED WAS CONSONANT WITH OBJECTIVES FOR HIS
PEOPLE HE HAD JUST EXPRESSED. IN SOME CASES, THESE WERE PROGRAMS
WE ADVOCATED IN VAIN TO PRE- REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT.

B. WE HAVE SCRUPULOUSLY REFRAINED FROM ANY ACTION THAT MIGHT
ENCOURAGE OR APPEAR TO ENCOURAGE ANY OPPOSITION GROUP IN ETHIOPIA.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 3507

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C. WE HAVE MAINTAINED OUR POLICY OF SUPPORT FOR ETHIOPIA'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY, DESPITE SOME INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE TO MODIFY IT.

D. WE HAVE NOT, HOWEVER, PERCEIVED AN EQUIVALENT EFFORT ON ETHIOPIA'S PART. ON CONTRARY, WE CANNOT AVOID NOTING WITH REGRET, GROWING ANTI-AMERICAN ATMOSPHERE OF PAST FEW MONTHS. THERE HAVE BEEN CONSTAT ACCUSATIONS THAT USG IS AIDING OPPOSITION GROUPS DESPITE STRONG POSSIBILITY THAT SUCH ACCUSATIONS WILL ENDANGER LIVES OF AMERICANS. WE ALSO CONCERNED THAT AS RESULT OF RECENT ACTIONS, ETHIOPIANS WILL CONCLUDE IT BETTER NOT TO ASSOCIATE WITH AMERICANS WHICH WOULD BE OF PARTICULAR CARE TO US IF WERE WERE TO FIND THAT WE UNABLE OBTAIN SUCH THINGS AS MEDICAL ASSISTANCE.

E. ON GENERAL SUBJECT OF BILATERAL RELATIONS, USG IS STILL WILLING TO TRY AND MAINTAIN A FRIENDLY AND COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP, BUT WE CANNOT JUSTIFY SUCH AN EFFORT TO AMERICAN CONGRESS AND PEOPLE WITHOUT CLEAR INDICATION IN SUBSTANCE AS WELL AS WORD THAT ETHIOPIA SHARES OUR DESIRE. WE NOTED WITH INTEREST EXEMPTION OF USAID FROM REDUCTION DECISION. IT HAS INDEED BEEN OUR INTENTION TO MAINTAIN AN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAM SINCE OUR CONCEPT FOR NEEDIEST SECTORS OF ETHIOPIAN SOCIETY CONTINUES, DESPITE RECENT DEVELOPMENTS, POSSIBLE PROBLEMS WITH OUR OWN LEGISLATION AND A CERTAIN UNRESPONSIVENESS ON PART OF ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITY WHICH HAS SLOWED DOWN OUR PROGRAMS. MOREOVER, WE HAVE CONFIDENTIAL

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CONVERTED TO GRANT AID FOR ETHIOPIA IN THIS FISCAL YEAR.

F. BUT MY GOVERNMENT IS UNDER PRESSURE AS RESULT OF EXISTING LEGISLATION, LACK OF MOVEMENT ON COMPENSATION CASES FOR EX-PROPRIATED PROPERTY, RECENT ACTIONS AGAINST OUR OFFICIAL PRESENCE IN ADDIS AND UNFOUNDED ALLEGATIONS OF COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITIES.

G. I WOULD THEREFORE BE HAPPY TO FORWARD ANY CONSTRUCTIVE SUGGESTIONS HE MIGHT HAVE TO WASHINGTON. THIS MEETING WOULD BE INTERPRETED AS POSITIVE SIGN BY WASHINGTON, BUT WHAT IS NOW NEEDED ARE POSITIVE STEPS BY YOUR GOVERNMENT TO OFFSET STEPS ALREADY TAKEN.

9. AFTER THANKING ME FOR CANDID AND FRANK EXPRESSION OF USG VIEWS, MENGISTU SAID THAT IN THREE YEARS, EPMG HAS NOT SINGLED OUT USG AS AN ENEMY. WHAT HAS HAPPENED HAS BEEN RESULT OF USG INITIATIVES. EPMG WOULD LIKE US TO LOOK AT REVOLUTION POSITIVELY AND HE HOPED WE WOULD MAKE NECESSARY EFFORT SEE IT IN ITS TRUE LIGHT.

10. HE TEN TURNED TO CUBANS AND SAID INSINUATIONS THAT CUBANS WILL TELL ETHIOPIANS WHAT TO DO ARE VERY OFFENSIVE TO ETHIOPIAN FEELINGS. ANYONE WHO HAS ETHIOPIAN WELL-BEING AT HEART CAN HELP OUR MEDICAL AND TECHNICAL SERVICES, BUT WE DO NOT ACCEPT BEING TOLD "HOW TO USE A GUN". IF THIS IS US PERCEPTION THAN AMERICANS DO NOT UNDERSTAND ETHIOPIA.

11. HE ENDED BY AGAIN REFERRING TO WEAPONS PURCHASES WITH THEIR OWN MONEY AND THE DELAYING AND HOLDING BACK OF "GUNBOATS" AND JEEPS. THIS WILL NOT AFFECT ETHIOPIAN SECURITY AND EPMG IS SURPRISED AT USG'S ACTION. I REPLIED BY SAYING THAT AS RESULT OF DIRECTED DEPARTURE OF MAAG AND DAO, ABROGATION OF 1953 AGREEMENT, CALL HOME OF TRAINEES FROM US AND CLOSURE OF DEFENSE ATTACHE OFFICE, IT WAS OUR PERCEPTION THAT EPMG WAS CLEARLY INDICATING TO US THEIR DESIRE TO TERMINATE MILITARY RELATIONSHIP. HE WAS AWARE OF REASON WHY WE HAD TERMINATED MAP, BUT ALSO SHOULD BE AWARE THAT OTHER FORMS
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OF ASSISTANCE WERE STILL AVAILABLE AT THAT TIME.

12. COMMENT: AS NOTED REFTEL, MENGISTU WAS CALM AND RELAXED THROUGH-OUT DISCUSSION, EVEN SMILING FROM TIME TO TIME. I HAVE IMPRESSION THAT WHILE INITIATIVE FOR MEETING CAME FROM MOFA IN ORDER GET ANSWERS TO MY REDUCTION REQUESTS, MENGISTU DID IN FACT WANT TO SEE ME TO GET SOME THOUGHTS OFF HIS CHEST. UNFORTUNATELY, HE DID MOST OF TALKING AND DID NOT RESPOND TO POINTS I MADE NOR GIVE ME MUCH OF AN OPPORTUNITY TO COUNTER SOME OF HIS COMMENTS. ACCORDINGLY THERE WAS NOT MUCH DIALOGUE AND MOST OF WHAT HE HAD TO SAY WAS NOT PARTICULARLY NEW, NOR DOES IT OFFER US MUCH TO GO ON FOR FUTURE. INDEED, ALL TOO OFTEN HE SOUNDED LIKE A PRISONER OF HIS OWN PROPAGANDA, AND HIS SENSITIVITY TO HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE WAS CLEAR. HE DID LISTEN CAREFULLY TO WHAT I HAD TO SAY AND I BELIEVE WAS PLEASED TO KNOW WE PLANNED TO CONTINUE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. CLEARLY HOWEVER, HIS PRIMARY MESSAGE WAS THAT PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY USG OFFICIALS ABOUT ETHIOPIA WERE NOT DOING BILATERAL RELATIONS ANY GOOD COUPLED WITH A PLEA FOR US TO RECOGNIZE ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION IN ITS TRUE LIGHT. HIS SECONDARY MESSAGE CONCERNED EPMG DISAPPOINTMENT AT UNDELIVERED MILITARY ITEMS. MOST IMPORTANT THING PERHAPS, WAS THAT HE SAW ME AT ALL. HE DID LISTEN, ALTHOUGH WHETHER HE HEARD IS SOMETHING ELSE AGAIN, AND HE DID LEAVE DOOR OPEN FOR FUTURE, IF NOT VERY WIDE, WHETHER HE MEANT WHAT HE SAID IN CLOSING ABOUT BEING WILLING TO SEE ME AGAIN, ONLY TIME WILL TELL.

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